THE PERSIMMONS.

Oh, a little persimmon grew high on a tree—
On a tree—on a tall, tall tree!
And a little boy said: "It is growing for me,
But I haven't a pole that can reach it," said he—
The persimmon that grew on the tree.

Oh, a little persimmon grew high on a tree—
On a tree—on a tall, tall tree!
And another boy said: "It is right overhead,
And when I grow big I can reach it," he said—
The persimmon that grew on the tree.

And while they were talking another boy came
To the tree—to the tall, tall tree,
And he jerked his short jacket and climbed to the top,
While they shouted below: "He will drop! He will drop!
He was fond of persimmons; he collared the crop
Of persimmons that grew on the tree!

Mercy Foote's Reconstruction.

A rug pathway meandered from the kitchen door to the parlor door, with ramifications on either side to chairs and sofa and table. Square rugs and round rugs and oblong, octagonal, oval rugs filled up all the chinks. There was scarcely a square inch of the carpet visible anywhere.

The two or three ambrotypes and steel engravings in solemn black walnut frames were befogged behind veils of mosquito-netting. The comfortable-looking lounge was draped in crisp, clean newspapers to protect the new covering underneath. The face of the clock on the mantel looked out coyly through its veil of netting.

It was dim and cool in the big, clean room—and empty. They sat in the kitchen or, on especially hot evenings, out on the porch. There was so much danger of flies in the sitting-room, and dust and sun-fading and all sorts of dreadful things, especially in dog-days. It was dog-days now.

Mercy Foote was upstairs in the unfinished chamber, "resting;" but it was so hot and so close that even to rest was hard work. She never dreamed of going into one of the spotless, speckless chambers and "mussing up" one of the white, plump beds, Mercy Foote was a very neat woman—some of the neighbors openly called her "p'ison neat."

About midway of the afternoon Nathan Foote came up through the orchard from the hay-field. He walked very slowley, as if it hurt him. Every minute or two he mopped his bald, shiny head with his handkerchief and drew long, tierd breaths. Nathan was almost an old man—a good deal older than Mercy.

He had been working hard all day, and every individual old muscle felt strained and sore; and how his back ached! It was a rather long way, too, up to the house.

Mercy put her lips to the window-screen and called sharply to him when he came into sight round the corn-house.

"Nathan, go in through the stable," she called, "and mind you slide the door to real quick behind you! I've been out there fly-powdering. I don't want to have flies following you in. Shut it the instant!"

"Yes, Mercy," Nathan said, wearily, It looked like a long, circuitous route into the house, and he was very tired. He slid into a narrow crevice in the door, rubbing his aching bones against the edges. Then he braced himself and slid back the heavy door.

In the sudden transition from the hot glare outside to the dusky interior he felt dizzy and blinded, and had to sit down on a wagon-thill a minute. Then he shuffled up the steep stairs and through the "shop" and wood-house to the kitchen, opening and shutting all the doors with conscientious despatch. Mercy's voice drifted down to him, muffled but incisive.

"Don't wash in the best wash-dish, Nathan. I've got it all scoured up. You get the old one over the tubs in the wood-house, and mind you empty the water out in the asparagus bed. I don't like to have the sink all wet up."

"Yes, Mercy."

He got the old basin and filled it and set it on a chair with the soft-soap crock. Some of the drops splashed to the shining floor, and stooping with evident pain, he wiped them up carefully.

"I declare," he murmured, "I don't know as I was ever more beat out than I am this afternoon! I don't know as I was ever! I guess I've got to lie down a spell."

"Nathan!"

"Yes, Mercy."

"If you're thirsty, you'd better draw some water out of the well; the pump's all dry and clean. I gave it a hard cleaning today, the last thing."

Nathan took the basin of water out through the stable door and emptied it over the asparagus-bed. He made a second journey over the same toilsome route for a drink of water.

"I've got to lie down somewhere right away!" he muttered. "I'm all beat out!"

"Nathan!" Mercy called.

"Yes, Mercy,"

"Did you rub your feet on the mat in the porch and the scraper?"

"The scraper's out to the kitchen door, Mercy!" Nathan called back, raising his voice with an effort.

"Did you rub 'em on the porch mat?"

"Yes. I don't know as I did all the times. I did once."

A groan, muffled but clearly audible, descended to Nathan.

"I can't help it!" he muttered. "I guess I'll go lie down on the sitting-room sofa a minute. I'll have to; I can't stand up."

He took off his boots and paddled softly along the rug pathway. It was so dim in there that not till he got close to the lounge did he notice the newspapers covering it. He lifted one of them off with a little determined twitch of his lips, but replaced it hastily, and padded softly back to the kitchen. He went to the door.

"Mercy," he called up, "where's the last paper? I don't see it anywhere."

"Goodness, Nathan Foote, shut that door! You'll let in a mess of flies!"

"Wher's the last paper, Mercy?" Nathan's diminished voice rose, patient and tired, to Mercy's ears through the closed door.

"It's all piled up nice, Nathan. You don't want it now. You take the almanac over the kitchen table and read the jokes!" she called back. He got the almanac and put on his boots. Then he dragged them wearily, step by step, out to the stable. His grizzled, seamy face was drawn with exhauston and pain.

Mercy Foote came down-stairs at precisely five o'clock to get supper. Just as she stepped over the kitchen threshold the last stroke of the clock was clanging. That was her rule. Mercy was as methodical as she was neat.

"Goodness," she exclaimed, "there's a fly!—there's two flies!" She caught up one of the deftly folded newspapers that she kept hidden in handy nooks and proceeded to wage war.

"Nathan's so careless!" she fretted. "But I didn't think they'd find their way clear in from the stable!"

She peered into the sitting-room, and noticed that one of the papers on the lounge was awry. "Nathan's been in there—yes, there's a wisp of hay on the speckled rug! Now I s'pose, I've got to go to sweeping!"

It was quarter of six before supper was ready on the kitchen table. Mercy had arranged the dishes precisely, but there seemed very few of them. "It's too hot to light the fire, and 'twould muss up dreadfully—the shavings and all. We'll have just a cold lunch. Nathan oughtn't to eat hearty victuals after haying and getting all heated up.

"Nathan! Nathan!" she called from the porch door, which she warily opened only a crack. He was not out there. She could not find him anywhere.

She went all over the house, and peered from all the tightly screened windows. She put on her sunbonnet and blew the dinner-horn. She always put on her sunbonnet when she blew the horn, nobody knew why. Mercy didn't know herself.

There was a little circular hole in the upper part of the kitchen door, protected by a swinging disk of wood. It was to blow the dinner-horn through. Nathan made it for her so that she need not open the door and run the risk of the entrance of flies. She slid away the wooden cover and quickly inserted the end of the horn into the hole, and blew long, resonant blasts. They echoed back to her lonesomely.

The clock struck six—seven. Still Nathan did not come. Mercy went out to the hay-field and all over the little farm. Her heart grew heavy with new, unacknowledged dread. Where was Nathan.

"I'm beginning to get scared," poor Mercy confessed to herself. Why was it that she kept remembering the sharp words she had said to Nathan? Why did she remember how old and tired out he had looked at dinner.

Why, when she went into the dreary little porch-room, should the wooden chairs stiff and uncomfortable, remind her so insistently of their sitting out there together—she and Nathan—to save "mussing" the sitting-room? She could see just how uneasily Nathan sat on the edge of his chair, without any resting place for his shirt-sleeved old arms—Goodness where was Nathan?

Terrible things she had read of and heard of kept recurring to her mind with dark insinuation. Could it be possible that weary old men with fussy, scolding wives ever—ever—Oh no! But where could Nathan be? Eight o'clock—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight slow, solemn, significant clangs! Mercy went out into the wood-shed—into the stable—anywhere, away from the sound of the clock's voice that scolded her incessantly.

The hungry old horse in his stall was whinnying and pawing for his supper. Mercy stroked his nose.

"I'll go get you some hay, poney," she said. She went upstairs to throw it down to him, and there was Nathan, asleep in the hay! He lay in the profound, relaxed slumber of utter weariness. The yellow almanac had fallen from his fingers and lay beside him. She knew he was tired, and not very well. He had been driven to take his rest in the barn!

Mercy tiptoed back into the house, breathing long, free breaths all the way, and forgetting to shut the doors.

She built a fire and filled the teakettle and made many trips to the pantry, coming back with sundry dishes that Nathan liked, and crowding the table with them. She took a lighted lamp into the sitting-room and set it on the table. With a vigorous sweep of the arm she bundled together the newspapers on the lounge, and carried them out.

"There," she said, "now I'll fetch a pillow and put a paper handy."

A few minutes later she stood in the porch door and blew long, steady, penetrating calls on the horn. Nathan heard them and came in, looking guilty.

"I guess I went to sleep, Mercy," he said. "I must have. I was all beat out when I came in."

They sat down together to the savory little supper. The pungent, pleasant odor of steaming tea filled the room. Nathan ate with the hearty relish of a well-rested man, and Mercy watched him with delight.

Suddenly Nathan suspended his knife and fork and looked across at Mercy, troubled.

"If there ain't two pesky flies!" he said, ruefully.

Mercy's eyes were glued with dogged heroism to her plate.

"Where?" she said, cheerfully. "I don't see 'em Nathan."—Youth's Companion.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF LONDON.

It Contains More Things Than Any Other City—Dust Enough for Food.

Only by degrees are the marvelous qualities of our London atmosphere becoming known. No city in the world can boast such a peculiar aerial composition as that which the inhabitants of the metropolis have served to them daily and nightly, without money and without price—for neither the government, county council nor vestries have yet attempted to tax the highly nutritive air which we breathe. Most people think that our atmosphere consists of practically nothing. Quite a mistake. It is both meat and drink. A paper contributed to the "Transactions" of the British Institute of Preventive Medicine states that even in a suburb the dust particles number 20,000 per cubic centimeter in the open air, and 44,000 in a quiet room; while in the city—O fortunatos nimium!—the totals per cubic centimeter were 500,000 when taken from a roof, 300,000 in a court, and about 400,000 in a room. In other words, the air of the square mile is 900 per cent. thicker than in the suburbs, which is in accord with the general experience that fogs are both more dense and more frequent over the centre than in the outskirts. But what is especially interesting is to learn that although dust is the great carrier of micro-organisms, there is only one of these articles per 38,000,000 atoms of dust. Thus it is calculated a man could live in the metropolis for several years and only absorb 25,000,000 microbes into his system from the air, or about the same number as he drinks in half a pint of unboiled milk. Of course, there are other serious objections to dust; but it is something to know that there is only one microbe to many millions of motes.—London Telegraph.

Pedestrian Feats.

It is true that the Greek soldier, who ran all the way from Marathon to Athens to bear the news of victory and dropped dead when he had delivered the message, had covered only twenty-six miles, yet he may have been worn with fighting when he started.

On the other hand, Deerfoot, the Indian runner of the Cattaraugus reservation, who once held the record in England and America, ran twelve miles in fifty-six minutes in London in 1861, and extraordinary stories of his long-distance running are told. Captain Barclay of England walked a thousand miles in a thousand hours, and W. S. George, the world's greatest amateur distance runner, followed the hounds on foot. Henry Schmel, in June, 1894, walked from Springfield, Ill., to Chicago, 188 miles, in sixty-nine hours and fifty minutes. In 1892 Schneideit, an Austrian printer, finding himself in Calcutta without means, walked all the way home from his native town, Rathenow, traveling on foot for two years across India, Afghanistan, Persia, Turkey, southern Russia, Bulgaria, Roumania and Hungary, and thence into Austria.

But these instances, which might be multiplied, are for the most part feats accomplished under special conditions or stress of circumstances or by picked men. In Apache land every Indian is a runner, asking no odds of earth or weather, and whether it be the peaceful Pueblo, trudging to his irrigated lands, forty miles and back, or the venomous Chiracahua, tamed to do service for Uncle Sam, the Man on Horseback may well regard him with amazement.—Lippincott's Magazine.

Plainly Impossible.

Alys—Here is a novel I found our maid reading about a lord who married a shop girl. How ridiculous!

Gladys—Very. As if any one did not know that a shop girl's salary is very small.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

THE VIRCINIUS AT SANTIAGO.

Unenviable Note 25 years Ago of the Scene of the Present Activity.

Since the Spanish fleet has been bottled up in the harbor of Santiago de Cuba frequent allusions have been made, both by public men and the press, to the historic "Virginius affair," which, in 1870, almost caused a war between the United States and Spain. There was a tremendous excitement aroused in this country, and it occasioned a long and diplomatic correspondence.

The Virginius, a ship registered in the New York custom house September 26, 1870, as the property of an American citizen, was captured on the high seas near Jamaica by the Spanish man-of-war Tornado, on October 31, 1873. The reason given was that she was about to land men and arms in Cuba, which was then engaged in the ten years' war against Spain. At the time of its capture the Virginius was flying the American flag. She was taken to Santiago.

President Grant at once remonstrated with the Spanish government, and through the United States minister to Spain, General Daniel E. Sickles, demanded the release of the Virginius and her crew.

Spain was at that time a republic, under President Castelar, and while his government was asking for time to obtain information and was making promises, the authorities in Cuba determined to take matters into their own hands. On November 7, 1873, the captain of the Virginius, Joseph Fry, and thirty-six of the crew were shot.

The next day twelve of the most prominent of the passengers were also shot. The captain general of Cuba, General De Rodas, directly sanctioned these murders.

When the news of this action became known in this country the excitement was intense. Meetings were held, and the bloody work was denounced.

President Grant authorized the putting of the navy on a war footing, diplomatic relations were on the point of severance and war was imminent.

Meanwhile President Castelar made the excuse that his orders to stay proceedings were received too late to prevent the crime. It was probably because Spain was just starting on her career as a republic that President Grant used every effort to adjust the difficulty through diplomatic means, and that war was averted.

Several times it seemed that hostilities could not be prevented. Once General Sickles sent for a ship to take him from Spain. At last, however, on November 29, a protocol was signed between Secretary Fish and Admiral Polo, by which Spain agreed to surrender the survivors of the crew and passengers of the Virginius, together with the ship, and to salute the flag of the United States on December 25. If, however, it should be proved in the interval that the Virginius had no right to fly the United States flag the salute should be dispensed with, though Spain should disclaim any intention to insult the flag. Three days before the time agreed on Secretary Fish announced himself as satisfied that the Virginius had no right to fly the flag, and the salute was dispensed with. On January 23 Admiral Polo made the disclaimer agreed on.

The Virginius was delivered to the United States navy at Bahia Honda on December 16, with the American flag flying. She was, however, unseaworthy, and, encountering a heavy storm off Cape Fear, sank. The prisoners who survived were surrendered on December 18, at Santiago de Cuba, and landed in safety in New York.

An Odorless Onion.

The latest product of scientific propagation is the odorless onion. Just how an onion can be odorless and still remain an onion is not explained. To most people the odor is all there is to an onion, and that is enough. The elimination of the characteristic feature of a vegetable of such long and strong standing in natural history ought to be reckoned among the proudest achievements of man. But an onion deprived of that delicious tang and the penetrating scent which goes with it can hardly be an onion. The palate which loves onions will not recognize it; calling a whitened, innocuous, insipid, plated bulb an onion will not make it one.

No true lover of onions will hail this new invasion of science. He eats his onion at dead of night, in silence and solitude. He rejoices in it and sleeps upon it. The incense of his praise fills the room and soothes him to delicious sleep. He rises in the morning after his sacrifice to pass the day in purification, to see no one until the sun hath sunk. It is a luxury and a worship. Shall he yield all this delight for an odorless bulb? Let others do as they will, he will not. An onion without an odor would be ashamed of itself.—Milwaukee (Wis.) Journal.

The Highest Bridge in Europe.

The bridge over the Wupperthal at Mungsten, Germany, which was opened to traffic on July 1, 1897, is 360 feet high, 1630 feet long and has a central span of 530 feet, it being the highest European bridge, with the exception of the Garabit viaduct in southern France, which is 405 feet in height.

SCIENTIFIC SCRAPS.

It is said that women criminals have larger hands and feet than average women.

A cube of cast iron one inch each way will be crushed under a pressure of ninety tons.

The heart beats ten strokes a minute less when one is lying down than when in an upright position.

Some scientists assert that the purest air in cities is found about twenty-five feet above the street surface.

An electric door mat has been invented, which rings a bell as soon as any one steps on it, thus making it safe to leave the doors open.

The occasional discovery of fossil plants and bones in the Arctic regions shows that at some period of history an almost tropical climate once prevailed in the far north.

It is reported that a huge central station will be constructed in Saxony to supply electricity throughout the the kingdom; 168 towns will be connected with the station.

Padlocks are being manufactured with an auxiliary chamber, which carries an explosive to be fired by a hammer inside the lock and give an alarm when the lock is tampered with.

Swiss postmen are delighted with a new electric arrangement introduced in some of the cities, by the use of which they send letters to the upper stories by simply placing them in a box. Their weight starts a current, which lifts them and rings a bell.

Machine guns are mounted on a pneumatic-tired motor carriage in a new English patent, the powder being obtained from oil motors, which will run the carriage at a fair speed on the road and may be geared to the firing mechanism of the guns when in action.

With an apparatus called the myophone a French scientist has proved that the nerves may live many hours after the death of the body. The sound in the instrument shows that a nerve may act on a muscle, in a state of electric excitability, without producing more than simple molecular vibration.

A German inventor has produced what he claims to be a burner for acetylene gas, on which soot cannot gather, as is sometimes the case. It is merely a small cup covered by a plate containing an opening corresponding to the usual burner. This device, it is claimed, secures a stronger pressure of gas and a more perfect combustion.

How Long Does It Take to Think?

Professor Richet says that it takes a man about one-eleventh of a second to think out each note of a musical scale. He explains the practice that people will often follow of bending their heads in order to catch each minute sound, by the fact that the smallest intervals of sound can be much better distinguished with one ear than with both. Thus the separateness of the clicks of a revolving toothed wheel were noted by one observer when they did not exceed 60 to the second, but using both ears he could not distinguish them when they occurred oftener than 15 times a second. Among the various ways in which Professor Richet tried to arrive at conclusions as to the amount of time necessary for realizing any physical sensations or mental impression was the touching of the skin repeatedly with light blows from a small hammer. The fact that the blows are separate and not continuous pressure can be distinguished when they follow one another as often as 1000 a second. The sharp sound of the electric spark from an induction coil was distinguished with one ear, when the rate was as high as 500 to the second. The sight is much less keen. When revolved at a speed no faster than 24 times a second, a disk, half white and half black, will appear gray. We also hear more rapidly than we can count. If a clock-clicking movement runs quicker than ten to the second we can count four clicks, while with 20 to the second we can count only two of them.—St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Watch as a Compass.

Very few people are aware of the fact that in a watch they are always provided with a compass, with which, when the sun is shining, the cardinal points can be determined. All one has to do is to point the hour hand to the sun, and south is exactly half-way between the hour and the figure twelve on the watch. This may seem strange to the average reader, but it is easily explained. While the sun is passing over 180 degrees (east to west) the hour hand of the watch passes over 360 degrees (from six o'clock to six o'clock). Therefore the angular movement of the sun in one corresponds to the angular movement of the hour in half an hour; hence, if we point the hour toward the sun the line from the point midway between the hour hand and twelve o'clock to the pivot of the hands will point to the south.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Earnest Effort.

Hax—What's the matter with that man? St. Vitus' dance?

Jax—No; he has the ague, and he's trying to shake it off.—Philadelphia Record.